

Virtual Public Open House Summary



Oklahoma Department of Transportation

I-40 Exit 65/65A in Clinton

Custer County, JP 31842(04)

Prepared by:



6450 S. Lewis Ave., Suite 300
Tulsa, OK 74136

February 17, 2021
Garver Project No.: 17037360

Executive Summary

This document summarizes the virtual public open house conducted for the I-40 Exit 65/65A Interchange Modification project in the City of Clinton, Custer County. The purpose of the public open house was to update the public on the status of the project, present the most recent alternatives (Alternative 2D and 9B) for the project, obtain public input, and outline the next steps and schedule for the project.

Due to concerns about the spread of COVID-19, ODOT held a virtual public open house. The public open house was held on-line between December 2 and December 21, 2020. Thirty-six (36) people signed in on the website. However, sign-in was not required. According to the website analytics, 897 unique users viewed the website over the 19-day period. After the home page, the interactive maps were the most frequently viewed pages (973 views of Alternative 2D, 358 views of Alternative 9B), followed by the presentation and comment submittal pages. In total, one hundred fifty-five (155) individuals submitted written comments/questions either through mail, email, or on the interactive maps. An additional 1,189 pre-filled comment forms expressing a preference for Alternative 9B were received from local businesses. An additional 763 names were submitted on a “petition” expressing a preference for Alternative 9B. It is not known if the individuals that submitted pre-filled comment forms and/or signed the petitions were unique or if some individuals submitted both. Comments from four state agencies were also received.

Agency comments included the following:

- The Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ) determined that no adverse environmental impacts under ODEQ jurisdiction are anticipated. All projects exceeding 1 acre of disturbance must obtain authorization under OKR10.
- The Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission (OAC) indicated that project does not appear to pose a hazard to safe and efficient use of navigable airspace.
- The Oklahoma Corporation Commission did not find any active or plugged oil and gas wells within the project area.
- Oklahoma State Parks indicated that Alternative 2D would be best for the Clinton High School tennis courts which are a Land and Water Conservation Fund (LCWF) project.

Of the one hundred fifty-five (155) people that submitted comments on the project, the majority (92, or 59%) expressed a preference for either Alternative 2D or Alternative 9B. Of those expressing an alternative preference, 51 (55%) preferred Alternative 2D, and 41 (45%) preferred Alternative 9B. An additional 34 comments were received that expressed a desire to keep Neptune Drive/Exit 65A open, although they did not expressly state a preference for Alternative 9B. Eight people commented to leave the interchanges alone and not do anything. Other comments were received in small numbers. In addition to the written comment forms, 1,189 pre-filled comment forms and 763 signatures were received expressing a preference for Alternative 9B. Comments are tabulated in **Table ES1**.

Table ES1: Major Issues of Concern

Issue	# of Comments
<i>Prefer Alternative 2D</i>	51
Safer/existing loop ramps at 65A are dangerous	21
Best for the future growth of Clinton/preserves more land for development	18
Less costly	10
Simpler/Alternative 9B is confusing	7
Best for access with frontage roads	5
Modernizes Gary Boulevard	1
Less impactful	1
<i>Prefer Alternative 9B</i>	41
Best for businesses/Alternative 2D will hurt businesses	24
Provides the best/most direct access to I-40	5
Need to maintain access to Route 66	4
Shorter trips/Alternative 2D will mean longer trips	3
I use 65A frequently	3
Alternative 2D is confusing/all traffic at one interchange	3
Alternative 2D will cause more traffic on residential streets	2
Alternative 2D will hurt tax revenues/economy	2
Exit 65A is the best route for visitors	1
City growth more important than cost or accidents	1
<i>Keep Neptune Drive Open</i>	34
<i>Don't do anything</i>	8
<i>Other</i>	41

Prefer the roundabouts (Alternative 7)	3
Thank you – this project is needed	2
Just fix Exit 65/add the eastbound on-ramp	2
Other comments/questions	34
Pre-filled Comments for Alternative 9B	1,189
Petition Signatures for Alternative 9B	763

Responses to Comments

Responses to the public comments on the project are listed below. ODOT responses are in *italics*.

Prefer Alternative 2D:

The primary benefit of Alternative 2D is increased safety. Maintaining the ramps at both Exits 65 and 65A present safety challenges related to merging traffic and speed differentials. The collision history in the area suggests that the existing ramp configuration and speeds may be contributing to the elevated collision rate. Alternative 2D is lower cost and uses less land, which results in potentially more land available for future development. Alternative 2D is a simpler layout and utilizes a more traditional diamond configuration, which is likely to be familiar to most travelers. Frontage roads would be provided on both sides of I-40 between Gary Boulevard and Neptune Drive/10th Street, and a free-flow turnround would be provided at Gary Boulevard so that traffic having to backtrack to and from Neptune Drive/10th Street would not need to pass through the all-way stop at Gary Boulevard. This would shorten the additional travel time to less than one minute per trip. Both alternatives include improvements to Gary Boulevard. Access to Neptune drive will be maintained with ramps to I-40 relocated to connect to the frontage road system.

Prefer Alternative 9B:

The primary benefit of Alternative 9B is providing more direct access to Neptune Drive/10th Street at Exit 65A. While the access at Exit 65A is convenient for the businesses directly adjacent to the interchange, the ease of access to most locations will not be significantly reduced with the removal of the Exit 65A ramps. Alternative 2D will provide frontage roads and is not anticipated to increase traffic on residential streets. I-40 access to and from Neptune Drive/10th Street will be maintained by converting the existing ramp intersections to frontage roads which will extend through Gary Boulevard to I-40. The additional travel time to reach Neptune Drive/10th Street from Gary Boulevard along the frontage road is anticipated to be less than one minute. Alternative 9B, while meeting minimum FHWA criteria for acceleration/deceleration lane lengths, does not provide improved safety. It is anticipated that collisions would increase slightly under Alternative 9B over the existing condition. While ODOT recognizes the importance of city growth and has partnered with the City of Clinton to develop this project, safety is ODOT's first priority.

Keep Neptune Drive Open:

Both alternatives keep Neptune Drive open. Alternative 2D provides access to Neptune Drive from I-40 via Gary Boulevard and frontage roads. Alternative 9B provides direct access to Neptune Drive from I-40, similar to today.

Don't do Anything:

The existing interchange configuration does not meet current design criteria, and there is an elevated collision rate as a result. Doing nothing will not achieve the project goals of improving safety and mobility.

Other Questions/Comments:

Prefer Alternative 7

- *Alternative 7 utilized roundabouts to keep both Exit 65 and 65A open. Alternative 7 received negative feedback from the public and the City of Clinton requested that more traditional options be investigated.*
- Thank you – the project is needed.
 - *Thank you for your comment.*
- Just fix Exit 65/add the eastbound on-ramp.
 - *An additional ramp cannot be added with the current configuration due to spacing between ramp movements and minimum weave distances required. In addition, only adding the missing ramp will not achieve the project goals of improving safety and mobility.*
- There is too much access to Gary Boulevard – traffic should use a frontage or backage road with a signal at Lexington Avenue.
 - *Right-of-way constraints prevent the addition of a frontage road between Gary Boulevard and the existing businesses. The City of Clinton could consider a circulation road behind those businesses in the future.*
- You should clarify that Alternative 2D does not close Exit 65A.
 - *Alternative 2D will remove the existing loop ramps at Exit 65A. Access to Neptune Drive will be provided via Exit 65 (Gary Boulevard) and frontage roads with a protected turn around.*
- Will our taxes go up because of this project?
 - *ODOT's portion of the project will be funded from state and federal sources. The funding source for the City of Clinton's portion (improvements to Gary Boulevard) has not been determined.*
- Construct sound walls.
 - *Once an alternative is selected, ODOT will perform a detailed traffic noise study according to ODOT and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) criteria. If noise impacts are identified and abatement proves to be prudent and feasible per ODOT Noise Policy, sound walls will be constructed.*

- Pull in the frontage roads closer to I-40 at Neptune to make more land available for development.
 - *The frontage roads are designed to use the existing pavement rather than build new pavement. In addition, moving the frontage roads in closer would require retaining walls for the I-40 embankment. Adding pavement and retaining walls would increase project cost.*
- Add access to the Hampton Inn from the I-40 off ramp.
 - *Direct access to interstate ramps is not allowed by ODOT and FHWA design criteria due to safety concerns.*
- Keep Red Wheat Drive between the two Kmart entrances to maintain circulation.
 - *Alternative 9B shows the reconstruction of pavement between the K-Mart entrances in the general location of the existing Red Wheat Drive.*
- Add a right turn on southbound Gary Boulevard for business access.
 - *Turn lanes will be evaluated based on traffic volume demand. There are two through lanes proposed in each direction on Gary Boulevard as well as a center two-way left turn lane.*
- Move Gary Boulevard further west.
 - *Moving Gary Boulevard further west was investigated but was not possible due to project constraints such as the bridge over the railroad, maximum allowable slopes on the road, and required weave distances. The current location shown for Gary Boulevard is the farthest west it could be shifted and still meet all the design criteria.*
- Would be nice to have sidewalks and crosswalks on Gary Boulevard.
 - *Cross walks and sidewalks were not investigated during the preliminary study, but the proposed Gary Boulevard improvements currently include a shelf area behind the curb that can be used to install a sidewalk in the future. Where proposed signals are warranted, cross walks will also be evaluated.*
- Don't like the long driveway to Kmart – seems to break up land that could be used for development.
 - *The second driveway provide more access and circulation to the old Kmart property; however, it is optional and not required.*
- Add signage at the intersection of Neptune and Chapman Road to direct I-40 traffic west to Gary Boulevard.
 - *Thank you for your comment. The plan for signs will be developed in later phases of the project. Adequate signage will be in place to instruct the motorists the route to Neptune Drive, Gary Boulevard, or any other location throughout the interchange.*
- Do the bridges at 28th Street get replaced? They need to be widened/updated.
 - *No, the bridges at 28th Street are not part of the current project.*
- Keep Exit 65A but make it safer.
 - *There are limited options for keeping all the access at Exit 65A while still implementing a safe design that meets all current criteria. Alternative 9B keeps Exit 65A but is not expected to improve safety.*

- Keep Red Wheat Drive and construct a 5-leg roundabout at Gary/Red Wheat/Lexington/Oliver.
 - *A 5-leg roundabout concept was considered during the early phases of the project. However, it received negative feedback as compared to a more standard intersection. Additionally, with the extension of Gary Boulevard and proposed direct connections for businesses, Red Wheat Drive results in a redundant corridor that the City must maintain as well as a significantly longer bridge along I-40 for ODOT to maintain. Due to increased costs, both short term and long term, and the fact the corridor would result in a redundant movement, Red Wheat Drive will be removed in either Alternative 9B or 2D and a more standard intersection will be provided at the Gary and Lexington/Oliver intersection.*
- Closing Red Wheat Drive reduces connectivity.
 - *Traffic will be able to use the new extension of Gary Boulevard and connectivity will remain, similar to today.*
- Connect the old Kmart to Mulberry Lane to the west.
 - *Such a connection, while possible, might increase traffic through residential areas which is not desirable. It would also require an at-grade railroad crossing which introduces the potential for collisions. Since these are both local roads, any new connections would be the decision of the City of Clinton and not part of the project to improve the highway.*
- The acceleration/deceleration lanes on Alternative 9B are good.
 - *These lane lengths meet minimum FHWA criteria.*
- Construct a roundabout at the Gary Boulevard/Blvd of Champions/I-40 ramp termini.
 - *An Alternative like this was considered earlier in the study, but received negative feedback as compared to an interchange with more common, standard intersection layouts along Gary Boulevard.*
- Add a southbound left turn lane from Gary Boulevard to Blvd. of Champions.
 - *The proposed center two-way left turn lane can be converted into a left turn bay based on traffic volume warrants and safety analysis evaluated during later design phases.*
- While the intersection of Gary and the I-40 ramps near the Water Zoo does seem confusing, there is a similar intersection on Czech Hall Road in Yukon and it works fine.
 - *Yes, the intersection between Gary Boulevard and the proposed ramps in the Alternative 9B configuration are similar to those mentioned in Yukon.*
- We visit the water park – there is easy access.
 - *Access to the Water Zoo Water Park from Neptune Drive will remain the same under both alternatives. Access from Gary Boulevard will be improved since the connection to Blvd. of Champions will result in a shorter distance required than the existing access from Red Wheat Drive.*
- Close Exit 65A – it is dangerous.
 - *Alternative 2D removes the loop ramps at Exit 65A to improve safety.*
- City Council does not fully support Alternative 2D.
 - *ODOT and the City of Clinton have been working together since the inception of the study to develop the various project alternatives. ODOT has made every effort to meet*

the requests of the City. ODOT will make the decision on the alternative based on several factors, including design feasibility, safety, cost, impacts, and input from the City and the public.

- Do whatever is simplest.
 - *ODOT considers many factors when selecting the proposed improvements including, but not limited to, safety and cost. The simplest improvement would be that which results in the safest and most cost-effective alternative, which also meets current design standards.*
- If it will improve traffic safety and mobility, I am for it.
 - *Alternative 2D is anticipated to be safer and promote better mobility.*
- Will you fix the grades on Lexington Avenue?
 - *The grades will be moderately improved but limited to only the reconnection required for the Gary Boulevard realignment. The grades will adhere to current design criteria for the roadway classification.*
- Please remove the trees in the I-40 right of way for visibility and aesthetics
 - *Any vegetation within the Right of Way that impedes visibility necessary for maintaining a safe clear zone offset will be removed.*
- Are you allowing for 6 lanes on I-40?
 - *Yes. The project includes 4 through lanes (2 each direction) but will accommodate the widening to 6 lanes if warranted by traffic analysis in the future.*
- Combine Exits 65 and 65A
 - *The previous Alternative 7 combined the two exits. However, this alternative received negative feedback from the public and the City of Clinton.*
- Will there be a stop sign or a signal at Gary Blvd/Lexington/Oliver?
 - *Based on traffic analysis, the intersection does not meet the required warrants for a traffic signal. Stop signs will be installed, similar to what is there today.*

Other comments and questions not specifically related to this project are not answered in detail here. Improvements to other Clinton city streets are beyond the scope of this project.

Alternative Selection

Based on the engineering and safety analysis, environmental impacts, costs, and in consideration of public input, ODOT has selected Alternative 2D for the project. While there were a large number of comment forms and signatures that indicated a preference for keeping the ramps at Neptune Drive, this configuration is less safe than Alternative 2D. ODOT's top priority is safety of the traveling public, particularly on interstate and state facilities. Many of the comments received asked that ODOT not close or remove access to Neptune Drive/10th street. Alternative 2D does not close Neptune Drive/10th Street. Access will be provided via frontage roads and a free-flow turnaround at Gary Boulevard. The additional time to enter or exit I-40 at Gary Boulevard vs. Neptune Drive is negligible. Adequate signage will be in place to instruct the motorists the route to Neptune Drive, Gary Boulevard, or any other location throughout the interchange. The decision to selected Alternative 2D was viewed as the best use

of public funds to improve the overall safety and function of the interchange. The City of Clinton passed a resolution in support of Alternative 2D at its February 16, 2021 meeting.